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IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD.

NESTON, CHESHIRE.

THE words 'In a Country Churchyard' will be for ever associated with one of the sweetest utterances in our English tongue, and dull and prosaic indeed must seem the words of any one who selects the same theme. The hand of a master has struck the lyre, and the measured strains will reverberate through the ages, touching and soothing human hearts with their hallowed tones. Gray has sung the hymn of our quiet dead, and we who fain would sing are silent listening to the pure notes. He has told us the story of their tranquil slumbers as it will never be told again, and it would appear that there is 'nothing more to be said,' yet—standing here in God's acre, and looking around upon the resting-places of some of those who have stood side by side with me in Life's battle—it seems to me that some brief reference to them might not prove altogether unprofitable or uninteresting.

As I sat myself hard by the church porch, the shadow of the tower glides slowly in among the tombs, and overcasts them one by one. A thrush that has been piping unseen in the branches of a weeping elm, drops quickly to the ground, hops lightly over a half-buried slab of red sandstone, and escapes with a momentary flutter of his moss-brown wings into a neighbouring coppice. Village children released from school pass down the path and, wandering in among the tall grass, gather the nodding buttercups. Soon the familiar click of the west gate is heard, and I am again alone with my thoughts.

The square church tower, which has kept watch century after century over the sleepers below, is massively built of red sandstone, and is embattled as if the builder had contemplated the attacks of other than spiritual foes. The windows are narrow, and the door is a marvel of strength. It is studded with mighty nails, and when the sexton has shot the sturdy bolts into their sockets, the belfry appears well fitted to sustain a siege. It

may have sustained many in its time; but History is very reticent about this quiet corner of Old England. The church existed at the Norman Conquest, and there are curious Runic stones lying in the belfry, which were disinterred during the work of restoration, and which point to an early Saxon burial ground. A few miles away is a gigantic stone, which the legend saith was launched from the hand of Thor, the mighty Thunder god, and gave its name to the adjacent village, Thor-Stone Town (Thurstaston). Hereabouts, too, were found a number of skeletons upon a jutting cliff near the marsh. The bones of one were of colossal size—the leader, probably, of the band which fought and fell by the water's edge when there was none to sing of their valour.

Since that remote period, stirring scenes have been witnessed from this spot. Vessels with prows like the fierce monsters of stone which spring from each side of the tower have oftentimes grated upon the shingle and loosed their viking crews upon the land. Roman and Norman have left traces of their presence, and psalm-singing Ironsides have trooped to the beach in stern array; but the churchyard is as though these things had never been.

Year by year it has gathered in its harvest from the village. Generation after generation of rustics have toiled a brief space, and have been received into its friendly bosom. They have lingered here after service and have 'turned in' at twilight to smoke and meditate; and at last, one by one, they have fallen out of the village circle to take up their abode here.

An old man who sleeps by the roadside yonder, and upon whose tomb are the familiar lines beginning 'Remember me as you pass by,' spent the greater portion of the last ten years of his life by his wife's grave. He came in the early morning, and after removing any microscopic weed that might have showed itself since the previous evening, would light his pipe and solemnly contemplate the stones in his vicinity. He went away regularly to his meals, and as regularly took his afternoon nap on the grass by the graveside.

Shortly before his last visit to the cherished spot, he requested me to decipher for him the dates upon several of the gravestones; and we conversed about many whom we had known in life, and who had passed away. I remarked that the churchyard was a very pretty place, and his face lighted up as he rejoined: 'Ah, mester, I've always thought I should like to be buried here, for'—looking around—'you see, there's such a splendid view from here.' This was uttered in good faith; and the old man seemed convinced that neither coffin lid nor churchyard clouds would obstruct his view. Perhaps they don't! In a few brief weeks he came to his favourite haunt to stay. 'Poor old William!'—the flowers upon your grave have run wild long ago, and no one seems to remember you as they pass by.

The country churchyard is not without the dust of those who have stood in the forefront of the battle. When the voice which has held the senate enthralled, grows strangely silent; when the pen of the great writer has fallen from his nerveless fingers for ever, and the blinds are closely drawn in the darkened chamber, they talk in subdued tones of the disposal of the casket which enshrined so much that was rare and noble, and which is now, alas! but a casket, spoken of as *it*. First one, and then another, remembers to have heard him speak of a churchyard that he had known in his boyhood, where the stones were moss-grown and not always perpendicular, but wherein was such peace that the very remembrance brought with it an inexplicable calm. And so it comes about that in the far distant hamlet, where the fame of the dead is but a faint echo, the village boys and girls learn special hymns, and the village organist practises the solemn strains of the Dead March.

There is one such reposing within a few paces of where I am sitting. He had fought long and grown gray, but his voice rang like a clarion to the last. On the very evening when the summons came, he was fighting a good fight; but he was weary, and spoke of rest. A few minutes afterwards he was bidden to turn aside from the struggle. When they brought him here, the organ pealed in an unwonted manner, and the church was filled with the scent of the flowers they had heaped above him. Strange faces thronged the pews that day, and a vast multitude walked and crowded about the graves outside, but he who had been so strong was borne silently through their midst and left here with tears. More than one bishop and a long train of clergy led the way. He was not of their order; but he had fought in the van for the pure and the true, and his place was hard to fill.

A few steps away is a plain cross of Yorkshire stone, half hidden in ivy, and as my gaze rests upon it, and my memory travels back, I see her whose name is inscribed on the base. Her hair was a mass of burnished gold, and as she rode through the village street followed by her favourite colliers, the villagers would glance furtively at her, and turn and gaze until the bright hair and blue riding-habit were out of sight. She was not young, and she was unmarried. The gossips

called her eccentric, and I heard by chance of some of her eccentricities. The beggars who came to her gate were frequently invited in, and were treated as honoured guests, and served with a sumptuous repast. On one occasion, when a poor shivering woman stopped at the front door of the villa, the lady of the house came out, looked at the defenceless feet of her visitor, and straightway removed her own shoes and handed them to her. A rough young fellow, who had been in the habit of abusing his donkey told me that he used to call at the villa every week for a silver coin, with which she bribed him to be kind to his beast. Eccentric, perhaps; but there lived One once who did many unfashionable things, and the world thought Him eccentric.

She, too, was called suddenly away. There was an organ recital at the parish church one evening, and the whole of the village attended the unusual entertainment. Among the items on the programme was, 'Oh for the Wings of a Dove,' with the addendum, 'By special request.' When the piece was played, the 'eccentric' lady abruptly left the church. The golden hair was seen in the village street no more, and the blinds of the villa were not raised next morning, for the lady had passed away suddenly during the night. It had been at her request that the special piece was played; and, before the day dawned again, the wings were hers.

Under the shade of a laburnum on my right rests one who was not less lovely in her life. As I think of her, the chamber where she lay so long comes vividly into my remembrance, and it seems that the last weary months she spent there were in reality her life, while all her preceding years were but an infinitesimal part of her existence. The windows of the chamber had a pleasant outlook upon the village street; but it was ordained for 'Auntie' that she should lie still for nearly a year, and that she should not have power to move her head even an inch. The right hand, too, had to lie motionless upon the counterpane. She was thus precluded from approaching the window; but a mirror was so arranged as to show all that was passing below. It reflected a brilliant spectacle one day. They were holding the village carnival, and the gardens for miles around had yielded up their brightest blooms to crown the white wands of the processionists. The street for the moment became a moving mass of flowers, and as they passed beneath 'Auntie's' windows the band paused, and the wands were lifted in greeting to her who would walk with them no more. On another day, as she lay there, the bells danced merrily in the steeple, and there was a sound of wheels outside—for it had been arranged that they should come to her direct from the church.—Now, when people lie dying their thoughts are apt to wander away to distant scenes. No heights are too ambitious for them. They will sometimes climb the stars, and mount and mount until even these are left far below. Some such thoughts may have occupied 'Auntie's' mind—who knows?—for when the wedding party, all white-robed and radiant, came into the room, she burst into tears.

Shortly before she came to lie there, the little girl who had always been with her had 'gone away.' She explained that their eyes had been directed to the earth, and that the little one had been taken up so that as they still looked at her

their gaze would also rest upon the golden pavement of the new city. 'Auntie' spoke bravely; but when the children raced past the house on their way from school, she would draw back from the window and cover her face with her hands. They had no portrait of the child when she went away; but a great artist painted a picture of 'Little Mrs Gamp,' and large engravings of it were scattered through the country. The quaint little figure was so like the little girl whom 'Auntie' had known, that it was framed and hung at the foot of the bed. There was yet another picture of a little girl looking at the stars, but 'Little Mrs Gamp' had the place of honour, and 'Auntie's' glance rested upon her continually. A few days before she was taken out into the sunshine 'Auntie' had a strange dream. She found herself looking for 'Little Mrs Gamp' among a multitude of strange people, and when at last she discovered the object of her search, the little one lifted up a tear-stained face, and said that she had thought Auntie 'was never coming.'

It was found afterwards that she had given directions that the furniture of her room should be re-arranged, and the pictures removed, that she might be the more easily forgotten. Her last wish was, however, disregarded. 'Little Mrs Gamp' looks down upon the vacant bed. 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star!' with her head poised upon one hand, is still gazing reflectively upwards at the blue—and the sunbeams wander in through the blinds and linger on the empty pillow.

Very tragic was the departure of one who lies in the south-west corner of the churchyard. He was the village schoolmaster, and had arranged to take the Sunday evening service for the organist of a neighbouring church. He laughed as he set out upon the journey, and was light of heart, as is often the fashion of those who go forth to die. The church was many centuries old, and storms innumerable had swept up from the sea and fallen upon it. Strange mutterings began to mingle with the service, and little gleams of light darted through the windows and leaped playfully on the walls. The mutterings rapidly swelled into a voice of terrible anger, and the lamps grew dim as the blinding flame hissed past the windows; but the people still worshipped. It was the Almighty who was speaking, and they bowed before Him in His sanctuary, having faith that their pleading rose clear above the raging of the storm. Long-drawn crashes, as of the pouring forth of an avalanche of thunderbolts, followed; and many glanced fearfully upward, thinking that the tower had been torn away. The calm voice of the minister was heard reading the lesson, and, as he concluded, the organ gave out the strains of a familiar chant, and the congregation rose to sing the 'Magnificat.' The triumphant ascription, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,' ascended—and then they stopped, for 'at the voice of His thunder they were afraid.' As the words left their lips, a fierce light was all about them, and they were flung back in their seats, deafened by the blast which shook the building. The wall of the church was ripped across, as one would tear a piece of old parchment, and mortar and rubbish were hurled through the air and rattled into the pews in the darkness—for the lamps had gone out. Then out of the silence was heard the voice of one praying aloud, and there was a sudden tramp-

ling of feet in the aisles. Many had fainted, but at last all save two gained the open air. One of the two who remained in the church all that night was the schoolmaster. I saw him next day lying as he had fallen back from the stool, with his fingers extended just as they had left the keys of the instrument. There were pulpit references afterwards, and the preachers spoke of one who in olden times was whirled heavenwards with chariot and horses of light.

Thus, as I look around, grave after grave tells me its story. 'For here we have no continuing city' is written on an ancient monument directly in front of me; and as I look steadfastly upon them the words seem to repeat themselves again and again in solemn tones. Names which follow with the explanatory 'Wife of the above,' 'Daughter of the above,' 'Son of the above,' force themselves upon my notice, and I find myself counting the spaces which intervened as they fell one by one into eternity, just as tiny drops of rain fall into the ocean. The inscriptions are as words from the silent land, spoken by those who have journeyed thither.

It is good for us that they have lived—ay, and it is good for us that they have died; out of the tomb of our shattered hopes, out of the bitter depth of our pain, spring purer thoughts and nobler aims. We take up the burdens of our tasks again, and tread the stony road of life, with lacerated feet and bleeding hearts; but our gaze is lifted to the lighted landscape beyond, and the voices of our beloved dead are ever bidding us 'be patient!'

Side by side with the highway of life, but far removed from the dust and turmoil of the road, lies the Country Churchyard. The spring flowers bloom early above the dead; the summer sun looks down upon the grassy mounds, and tinges the tombs at eventide with its 'parting gleam,' the autumn leaves fall thick upon them; the winter folds its white wings over them. So the seasons come and go, and they make no sign. The strife and the battle are not for them.

Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them. Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest and for ever,

Thousands of aching brains, where theirs no longer are busy,

Thousands of toiling hands, where theirs have ceased from their labours,

Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed their journey.

A DEAD RECKONING.

CHAPTER XI.

No one spoke for a moment or two after Margery had blurted out her news. Then for the second time Karovsky said: 'There is still one way of escape open to you.'

'And that is?'—said Gerald again.

'For me to personate you.'

'O monsieur!' cried Clara, a flash of hope leaping suddenly into her eyes.

'Karovsky, are you mad?'

'Pardon; I think not; but one can never be quite sure. Listen! These men who are coming to arrest you are strangers to you, or rather, you are a stranger to them; they have never set eyes on you before. I will answer to your name; I will go with them; and before they have time to discover their mistake, you will be far away.'

'And the consequences to yourself?'

'A few hours' detention—nothing more. Your English police know me not.' Then he added with a shrug: 'At St Petersburg or Berlin, ma foi, it might be somewhat different.'

'Karovsky, your offer is a noble one, and the risk to yourself might be greater than you seem to think. In any case, I cannot accept it.'

'Gerald, for my sake!' implored his wife.

'As I said before, I am tired of this life of perpetual hide-and-seek. Let it end; I am ready to face the worst.'

'No, no! Would you court a felon's doom, you whose innocence will one day be proved to the world?'

'Vous avez raison, madame,' said the Russian. Then placing his hands on Gerald's shoulders, he said: 'Go, Brooke, my friend; hide yourself elsewhere for a little time, and leave me to face these bloodhounds.'

Picot, who had been listening and watching in the background, now came boldly forward. It was enough for the kind-hearted mountebank to know that his friends were in trouble. 'I have une petite chambre en haut,' he said to Gerald. 'Come with me, monsieur, and I will hide you.'

'Yes, yes; go, dearest, with Monsieur Picot,' urged his wife, her beautiful eyes charged with anguished entreaty.

'For your sake, let it be as you wish,' answered Gerald sadly.

At this juncture there came a loud knocking at some door below stairs.

'Venez, monsieur—vite, vite!' said Picot.

Gerald hastily kissed his wife, gripped the Russian's hand for a moment, and then followed the mountebank.

'It will not be wise to keep our friends waiting,' said Karovsky. Then turning to Miss Primby: 'Madame, will you oblige me by taking charge of these trilles for a little while?' With that he handed her a card-case, a pocket-book stuffed with papers, and a bunch of keys.

'They will be mighty clever if they get them out of here,' muttered Miss Primby as the articles disappeared in the capacious depths of some hidden pocket.

The knocking was repeated in louder and more imperative terms than before.

'Let the door be opened,' said Karovsky to Margery; then he addressed a few words hurriedly in a low tone to Mrs Brooke.

The door at the foot of the stairs, which Margery in her alarm had taken the precaution to fasten, had apparently been originally put there with the view of more effectually separating the upper part of the house from the lower, probably at a time when the domicile was divided between two families. This door Margery now unbolted without a word; and without a word, after flashing a bull's-eye in her face, a sergeant of police and two men pushed past her and tramped heavily up-stairs.

'Mr Gerald Brooke, commonly known by the name of Stewart?' said the sergeant interrogatively as he advanced into the room, while his two men took up positions close to the door.

The Russian turned—he had been in the act of lighting a cigarette at the fireplace. 'Who are you, sir, and by what right do you intrude into this apartment?' he demanded haughtily.

The sergeant went a step or two nearer and laying a hand on his shoulder, said: 'Gerald Brooke, you are charged on a warrant with the wilful murder of the Baron Otto von Rosenberg on the 28th of June last at Beaulieu, near King's Harold, and you will have to consider yourself as my prisoner.'

The Russian dropped his cigarette. 'There is some strange mistake,' he said. 'I never either saw or spoke to the Baron von Rosenberg on the 28th of last June.'

'All right, sir; you can explain about that somewhere else; but I should advise you to say as little as possible just now.'

One of the men had advanced into the room, and now drew the officer's attention. 'I say, sergeant,' he whispered, 'the gent don't seem to answer much to the printed description, does he?'

'Idiot!' whispered back the other; 'as if a man couldn't dye his hair and make his beard and moustache grow any shape he liked! Besides, we knew beforehand that he was disguised, and this is the room where we were told we should find him.'

When the sergeant turned again, Clara was standing before Karovsky with a hand resting on each of his shoulders.

'You see,' whispered the sergeant to his subordinate. 'We were told his wife was living here with him, as well as an elderly lady—the aunt. He's the gent we want, and no mistake.'

'I shall only be away for a little while, carra mia,' said Karovsky, as he drew Clara to him. For a moment her head rested against his shoulder, then his lips lightly touched her forehead.

She turned from him, and sinking on a couch, buried her face in her hands.

Karovsky drew himself up to his full height. 'Now, sir, I am at your service,' he said to the sergeant.

A moment later, and the three women were left alone.

'They be clever uns, they be!' said Margery with a chuckle as the sound of the retreating footsteps died away.

'How noble, how magnanimous of Monsieur Karovsky!' exclaimed Miss Primby. 'I shall never think ill of the Russians again.'

'Now is the opportunity for Gerald to get away,' said Clara. 'The police may discover their mistake at any moment.' Her hand was on the door, when suddenly there was a sound which caused all three to start and stare at each other with eyes full of terror. It was the sound of unfamiliar footsteps ascending the stairs. Mrs Brooke shrank back as the door opened and George Crofton entered the room. 'You!' she gasped.

'Even so,' he answered as he glanced round the room. 'It is long since we met last.'

'Not since the day you crushed my husband's portrait under your heel.'

'As I have now crushed your husband himself.'

'What do you mean?'

'Clara Brooke, the hour of my revenge has struck. You slighted me once, but now my turn has come. It was through my efforts that your husband was tracked to this place. It was I who

gave information to the police. Never could there be a sweeter revenge than mine.'

'Can such wickedness exist unsmitten by Heaven!'

After that first glance round, he had never taken his eyes from Clara's blanched face. He spoke with a venomous intensity which lent to every word an added sting.

'Don't I just wish I was a man, instead of a great hulking good-for-nothing girl!' muttered Margery, half to Miss Primby and half to herself, as she defiantly rolled up the sleeves of her cotton gown.

For a little space, the two stood gazing at each other in silence.

Clara's heart beat painfully, but her eyes blazed into his full of scorn and defiance. Then she said: 'George Crofton, believe me or not, but my husband is as innocent of the crime laid to his charge as I am. It is not he who is a murderer, but you who are one after this night's work—in heart if not in deed.'

A sneering laugh broke from his lips. 'I was quite prepared to hear that rigmarole,' he said. 'It was only to be expected that you should swear to his innocence. It is possible you may believe in it—wives will believe anything.'

But Clara's ears, of late ever on the alert, had heard a certain sound. With a low cry she sprang to the door; but before she could reach it, it was opened from without, and Gerald, accompanied by Picot, appeared on the threshold.

Crofton fell back as if he had seen a face from the tomb. 'By what fiend's trick have I been fooled?' he cried.

'There stands the villain who betrayed you,' exclaimed the young wife, pointing to Crofton with outstretched finger.

'He! My cousin! Impossible.'

'It may not be too late yet,' exclaimed Crofton as he sprang to one of the windows and tore aside the curtain. But next instant, with a bound like that of a tiger, Picot had flung himself on him and had gripped his neck as in a vice with both his sinewy hands. The other was no match in point of strength for the mountebank; and before he knew what had happened he found himself on his back on the floor, half-choked, with Picot kneeling on his chest and regarding him with a sardonic grin.

Clara, with a natural impulse, had clung to her husband's arm. Miss Primby and Margery were too startled to utter a word.

Picot's hand went to some inner pocket and drew from it a small revolver; then rising to his feet, he said to Crofton: 'Oblige me by standing up, monsieur, and by taking a seat in that chair, or in one little minute you are a dead man.'

Crofton, with a snarl like that of some half-cowed wild animal, did as he was bidden.

Gerald stepped quickly forward and laid a hand on Picot's arm. 'What would you do?' he asked.

'Shoot him like the dog he is, if he move but one finger. If he move not—tie him up—gag him—and leave him here till you, monsieur, have time to get away.'

Then addressing himself to Margery, but without taking his eyes for an instant off Crofton, he said: 'My good Margot, in my room up-stairs

you will find one piece of rope. Bring him here. Dépêchez-vous—quick.'

Margery needed no second bidding.

Then the mountebank said to Gerald: 'You must not stop here any longer, monsieur; the police may come back at any moment.'

'Yes—come, come,' urged Clara. 'Another minute, and it may be too late.'

'George, I did not deserve this at your hands,' said Gerald with grave sadness to his cousin. The only answer was a scowl and an execration muttered between his teeth.

Gerald, his wife, and Miss Primby retired into the farther room and closed the folding-doors. Margery was back by this time, carrying a small coil of rope.

'Good child.—Now hold this—so,' said Picot, as he placed the revolver in Margery's hand and stationed her about a couple of yards from Crofton. 'If you see that man stir from his chair, press your finger against this little thing, and—pouf—he will never stir again. Hold him steady—so. You have no fear—hein?'

'Why, o' course not,' laughed Margery. 'It would do me good to shoot the likes o' him.'

With a dexterity that seemed as if it might have been derived from long practice, Picot now proceeded to bind Crofton securely in his chair.

'You scoundrel! you shall suffer for this,' muttered the latter between his teeth.

'A' la bonne heure, monsieur,' responded the mountebank airily. Then perceiving a corner of a handkerchief protruding from his pocket, he drew it forth, and tearing a narrow strip off it, he proceeded to firmly bind the other's wrists; then making a bandage of the remainder, he covered his mouth with it and tied it in a double knot at the back of his neck. 'Ah, ha! that do the trick,' he laughed. 'How found you yourself? Very comfortable—hein?'

Margery, who had watched the operation with great glee, now gave back the revolver and retired to the inner room. Picot sat down a little way from his prisoner, but for the present took no further notice of him. He had heard a footstep on the stairs a minute or two previously, and rightly judged that Gerald was already gone.

From the first day of taking up their abode at No. 5 Pym's Buildings, Clara and her husband had prepared themselves for an emergency like the present one. They were always ready for immediate flight, and had arranged the means for communication in case of an enforced separation.

At the end of a few minutes Margery returned, carrying a folded paper, which she gave to Picot, at the same time whispering a few hurried words in his ear. The mountebank nodded and smiled and kissed the tips of his fingers. Then the girl went back, and the two men were left alone. But presently both of them heard the footsteps of more persons than one descending the stairs. Picot listened intently till the sound had died away, and then proceeded to light a cigarette. Of Crofton, sitting there bound and gagged, he took not the slightest apparent notice.

A quarter of an hour passed thus, and with the exception of a footfall now and then in the court below no sound broke the silence. At the end of that time, Picot's cigarette being finished, he rose, pushed back his chair, clapped his hat on

his head, and after a last examination of his prisoner's bonds, he marched out of the room without a word, and so down-stairs and out of the house, first shutting behind him the door which divided the upper rooms from the ground floor.

Left alone, George Crofton began at once to struggle desperately to free himself, but all to no purpose. After a little time, however, he discovered that the chair in which he was bound moved on casters, and this discovery put an idea into his head such as would not have entered it under other circumstances. The room was lighted by a lamp on a low table, and to this table he managed by degrees to slide his chair along the floor. Then setting his teeth hard, and stretching his arms to the fullest extent his bonds would allow of his doing, he held his wrists over the flame of the lamp, and kept them there unflinchingly till the outermost coil of the ligature which bound them was burnt through. When once his hands were at liberty, very few minutes sufficed to make him a free man.

'My revenge is yet to come, Gerald Brooke,' he said aloud as he paused at the door and took a last glance round. 'It is but delayed for a little while, and every day's delay will serve but to make it sweeter at the last.'

CHAPTER XII.

We are back once more at Linden Villa. It is a March evening, and the clock has just struck nine. George Crofton is smoking a cigar, and gazing fixedly into the fire, seeing pictures in the glowing embers which are anything but pleasant ones, if one may judge by the lowering expression of his face. He looks haggard and careworn, and is no longer so fastidious with regard to his personal appearance as he used to be. Dissipation has set its unmistakable seal upon him; he has the air of a man who is going slowly but surely downhill.

His wife is amusing herself somewhat listlessly at the piano. There is a slightly worn look about her eyes, and the line of her lips looks thinner and more hard set than it was wont to do. Married life had not brought Stephanie the happiness, or even the content, she had looked forward to. The awakening had come soon, and had not been a pleasant one. Not long had it taken her to discover that she had mated herself with an inveterate gambler, if not with something worse. So long as plump young pigeons were to be had for the plucking, matters had gone on swimmingly at Linden Villa. There had been no lack of money, and Stephanie had never cared to inquire too curiously how it had been come by. But after a time Crofton's wonderful luck at cards began to be commented upon; people began to be shy of playing at the same table with him; pigeons were warned to avoid him; and when, one unfortunate evening, he was detected cheating at the club, and unmasked by a member cleverer in that particular line than himself, his career in that sphere of life came to an end for ever. But his ambition had not been satisfied with the comparatively small gains of the card-table; he had bet heavily on the St Leger and other races, and had been unfortunate in all. So far he had been able to meet his racing liabilities, but the doing so had exhausted the whole of his available resources, and matters at

Linden Villa had now come to a pass that might almost be termed desperate.

Stephanie brought her rousings to an end with a grand crash; then turning half round she said in her clear metallic tones: 'Have you anything to talk about, mon ange? Have you nothing to say to me?' Her husband's back was towards her as he sat brooding sullenly in front of the fire. 'It is not often that you stay at home of an evening, and when you do—chut! I might as well be alone.'

He shrugged his shoulders. 'What would you have me talk about? Our debts—our difficulties—our'—

'Why not?' she broke in quickly. 'If you talked about them a little oftener, it might be all the better. You seem neither to know nor care anything about them. You are out from morning till night. It is I who have to promise, to cajole, to lie, first to one person and then to another who come here demanding money when I have none to give them. Oh, it is a charming life—mine! N'importe. It will end itself in a little while.'

'What do you mean? What new trick are you hatching now?' he demanded.

'It is nothing new—it has been in my head for a long time. Shall I tell you what it is? Why not?' The fingers of one hand were still resting on the piano. She struck a note or two carelessly, and then went on speaking as quietly as though she were mentioning some trifling detail of everyday life. 'One evening, cheri, when you come home you will not find me; I shall be gone. This life suits me no longer. I will change it all. I will go back to the life I used to love so well. I have had a letter. Signor Ventelli is at Brussels; he prays to me to return to him. I shall go. You and I, my friend, can no longer live together. It will be better for both that we should part.' Again her fingers struck a note or two carelessly.

Crofton was roused at last. He started to his feet with an imprecation and faced his wife. 'What confounded stuff and nonsense you are talking, Steph,' he exclaimed. 'As if I believed a word of it!'

'Do I ever say that I will do a thing when I do not intend doing it?' she quietly asked.—In his own mind he was obliged to confess that she did not.—'We have made a mistake, you and I, and have found it out in time,' she resumed. 'We can be friends, always friends—why not? But you will go your way, and I mine; that is all.'

The cold indifference of her tone and manner stung him to the quick. Evidently she was minded to cast him off as carelessly as she would an old glove. The sullen fire in his heart blazed up in a moment. He loved this woman after a fashion of his own, and was in nowise inclined to let her go. 'What you say is utter nonsense. I would have you remember that you are my wife, and that I can claim you as such anywhere and everywhere.'

'And do you imagine that if I were twenty times a wife I should allow you or any other man to claim me as such against my will?' demanded Steph with a contemptuous laugh. 'Tza! tza! my friend, you talk like a child.'

They were standing face to face, and for a few moments they stared at each other without speaking; but the clear resolute light that shone out of Steph's eyes cowed, for a time at least, the fitful,

dangerous gleam flickering redly in her husband's bloodshot orbs, as though it were a reflection from some Tophet below.

George Crofton turned away, and crossing to the sideboard, poured himself out a quantity of brandy. 'You would be a fool, Steph, to leave me as you talk of doing, were it only for one thing,' he said dryly. He seemed to have quite recovered his equanimity, and was choosing a cigar as he spoke.

'If it pleases me to be a fool, why not?'

'Has it never occurred to you that any morning the newspapers may tell us that my cousin, Gerald Brooke, has been captured? Every day, that is the first news I look for.'

'Ah, bah! you mock yourself. Your cousin will never be arrested now; he has got safe away to some foreign country long ago.'

'You have no ground for saying that. Any hour may bring the tidings of his capture, and then—— But you know already what the result of his conviction would be to you and me. Beechley Towers and six thousand a year—nothing less.'

'You deceive yourself,' resumed Steph. 'You are waiting for what will never happen. Nine months have passed since the murder, and the crime is half forgotten. You let Gerald Brooke slip through your fingers once; but you will never have the chance of doing so again.—Let us come back to realities, to the things we can touch. Dreams never had any charms for me.'

He went back to the fireplace with his cigar, and took up a position on the hearth-rug. 'As you say—let us stick to realities; it may perhaps be the wisest,' he went on. 'What, then, would you think, what would you say, if I were to tell you as a fact that in less than six weeks from to-day I shall be in possession of ten thousand pounds?'

'I should both think and say that it was not a fact, but a dream, a—what do you call it?—a Will-o'-the-wisp.'

'And yet it is not a dream, but a sober solid fact, as a very short time will prove.'

She raised her eyebrows; evidently, she was incredulous. 'You made sure that you would win two thousand pounds at Doncaster, whereas you contrived to lose five hundred. You were just as certain that you would win'—

'What I am referring to now has nothing to do with horseracing,' he broke in impatiently. 'Listen!' he added; and with that he planted himself astride a chair and confronted her, resting his arms on the back of it and puffing occasionally at his cigar as he talked. 'I am about to tell you something which it was my intention not to have spoken about till later on; but it matters little whether you are told now or a month hence.' He moved his chair nearer to her, and when he next spoke it was in a lower voice: 'The young Earl of Leamington, who is enormously rich, is to be married on the 27th of next month. On the 14th of April one of the partners in a certain well-known firm of London jewellers, accompanied by an assistant, will start for the Earl's seat in the north carrying with him jewelry of the value of over twenty thousand pounds, for the purpose of enabling his lordship to select certain presents for his bride.

That box of jewelry will never reach its destination.'

Stephanie was staring at him with wide-open eyes. 'You would not—— she exclaimed, and then she paused.

'Yes, I would, and will,' he answered with a sinister smile. 'I and certain friends of mine have planned to make that box our own. The whole scheme is cut and dried; all the arrangements in connection with the journey are known to us; and so carefully have our plans been worked out, that it is next to impossible that we should fail.'

'And you, George Crofton, my husband, have sunk to this—that you would become a common robber, a thief, a voleur!'

His face darkened ominously, and the gash in his lip looked as large again as it usually did. 'What would you have?' he asked with a snarl. 'My cursed ill-luck has driven me to it. I cannot starve, neither will I.'

For a little while neither spoke.

'I didn't think you would take my news like this, Steph,' he said presently. 'Think of the prize! How is it possible for a man fixed as I am to resist trying to make it his own? One half comes to me because the plan is mine, but of course I can't work without confederates. My share will be worth ten thousand at the very least; and then, hey presto for the New World and a fresh start in life with a clean slate!—What say you, Steph?'

'At present, I say nothing more than I have said already,' she answered coldly. 'I must have time to think.'

MOUNTAIN LIONS AND WOLVES.

THE Mountain Lion of North America is one of the most dangerous of the wild animals which are found in the mountains of the Far West. Although called a lion, yet this animal bears no resemblance to the African lion except so far as its fierceness is concerned. It really belongs to the same family as the wild-cat or catamount, but is of much greater size, generally being about as large in body and limb as a full-grown sheep-dog. It is rarely seen in the vicinity of settlements, except driven thither by hunger, when it will attack cattle, sheep, horses, or poultry, and at times human beings. But, as a general thing, if not molested it will not attack human beings; though, if wounded, there is no animal which will make a more desperate fight, regardless of consequences. It cannot be driven off from an attack as long as life lasts; it must be killed to be beaten. Its chief peculiarity is its cry, which the most experienced hunter has at times mistaken for the wail of a child in distress. This feature makes the beast more dangerous, especially if he should establish his lair in the vicinity of a settlement, because, unless a person is an old-timer, he will be deceived by that cry whenever he hears it. It is the most perfect imitation of a child's wail of lament I ever heard, more perfect than the cleverest mimic could utter.

Well do I remember the first time I ever heard it. On a winter's night several years ago, while residing in an isolated place in the foot-hills, I was awakened by that cry. Without a second thought I bounded from my bed with the inten-

tion of finding the lost child. As I was opening the door the cry was repeated; this time it was plain and distinct, and apparently very near to the door. I searched the near vicinity thoroughly, but failed to find any child in distress, and was on the point of returning to my bed, when my attention was called to the fact that the watchdog, one which had never failed to sound an alarm at the approach of any person or animal in the night, had not in this instance barked, nor was he at his accustomed post near the door of the house. But instead, I found him cowering in his kennel, apparently terror-stricken. This to me was inexplicable until the next morning, when I saw the tracks in the snow of the beast's feet, larger than the footprints of any ordinary-sized dog.

At another time I had the opportunity of observing the effect on a horse when ridden near a mountain lion. It was late one night in the autumn. I was riding along a lonely mountain road, and when only about two miles from the town or mining camp, I heard the cry of the mountain lion. My horse at once showed fear and refused to move forward. His trembling was so intense that he fairly shook me in the saddle. To whip and spur he paid no attention. Indeed, it was only by the strongest effort that I could prevent him from turning and bolting in the direction we had come from. A crashing in the brush a short distance in advance of me increased the horse's fear and restiveness to such an extent as almost to unhorse me. We both knew full well what that crashing meant; but I also was well satisfied that the beast would not trouble us, because I knew that only a short distance across the hill was a slaughter-house, whither I judged the terror of the mountains was journeying. Although quite a cold night, I found my horse sweating as freely because of its fright as if I had ridden on a dead run for miles.

Another experience, and involuntary meeting with a mountain lion which I had one night when afoot, proved to me conclusively that although dangerous when wounded, it would not attack a man as a rule if not provoked. I was walking along an unfrequented mountain trail about ten o'clock when I heard the lion's cry in the woods not far from me. To say that I was nervous does not express my feelings, for I was scared, the more so because I happened to be entirely unarmed. For the first time for years I had lent my trusty revolver, which by day always rested in its scabbard on my right hip, and by night was carefully placed under my pillow. But there was no help for me; the road I was travelling led home, and although the cry sounded in advance of me, yet I would rather walk on and run my chances with the lion, than retrace my steps, and hear the jeers and scoffs of my late companions at what they and myself would consider an act of cowardice. Besides, the thought that his majesty might not be going to cross my path at all was quite consoling.

All doubt, however, on this subject was removed when the moon came out from behind a cloud, and almost at the same instant the lion sprang into the road from the brush not more than fifteen feet in front of me. Then all the stories I had heard about its ability to cover forty-five feet in one spring down an inclined plane, and

twenty-five feet on a level, flashed through my mind as I stood rooted to the spot with my eyes riveted on those of the intruder. Talk about balls of living fire! Why, I thought that lion's eyes looked as large as two suns on a midsummer day and equally as brilliant. It was only for a minute at most; but it seemed an hour before he turned in a very dignified manner and trotted up the side-hill.

The largest mountain lion I ever saw was one killed by a hunter in the Black Hills, which measured seven feet from tip of nose to tip of tail, or over five feet and a half from tip of nose to root of tail. Miners and hunters fear meeting a grizzly or cinnamon bear less than the mountain lion, because of the latter's ability to spring such a long distance, and to climb trees as quickly as a cat. Its jaws are very strong, and set with very sharp teeth; while its feet are armed with claws stronger, longer, and sharper than those possessed by any animal except it be the tiger or panther.

Another animal seen on the western prairies which has a peculiarity in its cry, howl, or bark, whichever you like to call it, for it resembles all at once, is the cayote wolf. This animal is the direct opposite to the mountain lion in all its characteristics except its partiality for poultry. Neither is it possessed of any of the savage qualities of the timber or gray wolf. It is really more like a fox both in nature and appearance and size, but gets its name of wolf because of the peculiar noise it makes. One of these animals when howling at night makes such a racket that a 'tenderfoot' would be convinced there were a thousand of them round. When hungry, they will sneak into a camp at night and steal bacon or boots, bridles, or anything made of leather. But the least movement will scare them away; they won't even make a fight with a dog.

On the plains and mountains we find three distinct varieties of wolves. First, the little cowardly cayote; next, the gray prairie wolf; and last, the brown gaunt timber wolf. The two last varieties have been known in exceptional cases, when in large packs, to attack people; but usually they are content with committing depredations on sheep-folds and chicken roosts. In 1870, on the prairies in Western Kansas, I knew of cases where the gray wolves had followed calves and yearlings, and by jumping on their haunches and cutting the muscles of their hind-legs with their sharp fangs, dragged them down and killed many young stock-cattle. Every cowboy when in winter-quarters will be found provided with a good supply of strychnine; and when they find the carcass of a calf or other creature killed by wolves, they poison the meat; and on the next night, when the pack come to finish their feast, many of them fall as prey to the cowboy's poison, and their bodies being found on the morrow, are skinned. The hides of the gray and timber wolves are valuable, but those of the cayote are almost worthless.

Nearly all the States and Territories pay a reward for killing wolves; and many hunters in years gone by used to live on the buffalo and cattle ranches all winter through, and give their entire attention to killing wolves for the bounty and value of their hides. The larger varieties will when wounded fight hard, and often fight dogs that pursue them, to the sorrow of

the dogs and their owners, for almost invariably they are killed because of the intense strength in the wolf's jaws and extreme length of their fangs. In fighting, these wolves do not show any of the tenacity possessed by bulldogs, their method being a series of quick snaps as they attempt to escape from their pursuers. Rarely are wolves seen in the daytime, except the cayote; but the traveller will see many of these as he rides over the Western prairies. Wolves used to be found at night following in the trail of any buffalo that may have been mortally wounded by the hunters. When he drops to the ground, they attack the body and gorge themselves; returning to the feast every night as long as any meat is left on the bones of the carcase, or until they fall prey to poison.

A LEGAL SECRET.

CHAP. II.—DREAMERS.

TOOK'S COURT, Chancery Lane, has not a very sunny outlook even on the brightest of days; it is shut in on all sides, except at the narrow entrance, by tall antique houses, with dusty shelves over their doorways and dusty stone steps below. The open window-shutters, begrimed with many coatings of London smoke, are fastened by rusty hooks against the walls. A dull wintry patch of sky hangs overhead; and from there a twilight falls upon hurrying figures—with their echoing footsteps and flitting shadows—passing in and out of this old courtyard. When the evening becomes still more gloomy, and the patch of sky is a mere patch of black, a dismal street lamp in the centre of the Court throws a glimmer through its dusty panes upon the houses on each side; and where the blinds are not yet drawn, and there is no stronger light to oppose it, this modest gleam enters a room quite boldly. There is one room in particular, in which a young girl is seated over a cheerless fire, where this ghost of a light looks in; and it only seems to add to the cheerless surroundings. For the room is small, dingy, and threadbare in appearance. The carpet is worn in places almost to the boards; and there are splashes of ink on the floor, and even on the walls, as if a shower of writing-fluid had recently fallen.

Although simply dressed in a dark serge, the girl appears out of place in the midst of such obvious poverty. There is little in her look and manner to suggest contentment, or even submission. The knitted brow, the curl of the pretty lips, the expressive pressure of the fingers against the dark hair, indicate a self-willed and sensitive nature; and so absorbed is she in her own thoughts, that neither the sound of a peculiar step in the courtyard, nor even the rattling of a latchkey in the door, attracts her attention. It is only when a lean shabby-looking man with a wizened face comes in that the girl starts and glances up. She tries bravely to hide her dejection with a little laugh as she holds out her hand to welcome him to a place beside her on the hearth.

'Dreaming again, Rosa?'—and while speaking, the man sat down before the fire and began to

warm his hands. 'Dreaming again?' His tone, although reproachful, was not wanting in affection.

'I was wondering,' said she, while stroking a large black cat on the hearthrug at her feet, 'whether the impressions of my childhood—the time seems so distant—could be mere fancy? How old was I, dad, when you first took me in?'

The man regarded Rosa thoughtfully. 'How old? Between five and six.—But I can't fix a date, my dear,' he added; 'that's impossible. Your birthday, you know, wasn't spoken of.' Pausing a moment to tap a little wooden box, he extracted a pinch of snuff and then resumed, as though speaking to himself: 'No; he was a reticent party, he was'—and he shook his head at the recollection—'a very reticent party indeed.'

'Twelve years ago,' said Rosa—'twelve years to-day?'

'This very day. Twelve years this afternoon, my dear, since he left you under our care. And that's why,' he added, 'we call this your birthday.'

And now, as he shifted his seat to the table and leant over a portable desk with his back to the window, it became apparent that he and this little parlour must have grown inky and threadbare together. The man's face was sallow and creased like parchment that has been kept in the dusty corner of a lawyer's office for years; and his scanty hair was of a gray dingy colour that might have belonged to a dusty corner too. And yet the man's appearance could scarcely have failed to awaken sympathy. It was kindly in expression, and there was something irresistibly pathetic in the gray watery eyes.

'Then I am seventeen to-day,' said the girl—'or am I eighteen? I think I must be eighteen, dad,' she went on in a thoughtful mood, 'for some of my dreams, as you call them, seem like reality.—What was the gentleman like?'

'The party was keen-featured,' Then he added musingly: 'I should know him again among a thousand.'

'He never told you my name?'

'Why, no. You told us that,' said the man. 'Mother asked you as soon as he was gone. "Rosa," says you.—But as to your surname, we never could make that out.'

'Ah! If we only knew my name,' said the girl in a low voice, 'you would have found out long ago whether the home which I have so often told you about was really mine; and whether that beautiful face—a face bending over my pillow at night—was the face of my own mother. It sometimes seems to me as if it must have been true,' she added, with a look of discontent returning to her face. 'Is it not a shame, if my parents are rich, that I should live in such poverty as this?'

The old man looked troubled. He took a quill pen from behind his ear and began to stroke his chin agitatedly, and looked at the girl and then at his desk. 'Rosa,' said he, presently breaking the silence, 'what is the use, my dear, of thinking so much about the past? It leads to no good; it only makes one wretched.—Not that I've any right to expect,' he added in an almost humble tone, that removed any suspicion of irony,

'that a young lady born in the lap of luxury—if I may so express myself—could easily lead herself to take a much brighter view of *this* life. Before we came to town—before mother died—there were fields to run about in, and you were younger. But there's a bit of garden in New Square, just across Chancery Lane; and there's Lincoln's Inn Fields hard by; and when one listens to the sparrows, though it ain't much of a song, it makes one fancy, as the birds must do, that the spring ain't very far off now.'

The brightening hopeful look on the careworn features which accompanied these words brought a smile to Rosa's lips. She left her seat and went and laid her hand tenderly on the man's shoulder. 'Daddy,' said she with a repentant look, 'I will try to be more reasonable; I will try to think less about my sunny childhood. I always get dreaming more on my birthday, as we call it, than at any other time. Don't I?'

The man nodded and smiled.

'But, daddy, I was not thinking altogether about myself,' she went on, 'though I know I'm very selfish; I was thinking, if I could find my beautiful mother, that I could tell her what a father you had been to me; and she would make you rich and happy.'

'Would she? Ah, my dear,' said the man, shaking his head incredulously, 'you don't know the world.—But I'm forgetting,' he suddenly added, with a glance towards the window. 'I'm expecting a visitor; he may be here at any moment!'

'A visitor?'

'I've been calling, as I was advised, at Pilkington's,' the man explained, 'and'—

'Pilkington?' She spoke scarcely above a whisper. 'How that name reminds me of my old home.'

'And,' the man continued, scarcely heeding the interruption, 'the junior partner, Mr Trench, being too busy to see me, sent out a message to say that as soon as he was disengaged he would step over and have a talk about the work. There's a vacancy in the office; and it looks very much as if I should get the post.'

This was good news. For the last few weeks the poor clerk had been out of employment, and his slender savings were exhausted. He had confessed to Rosa only yesterday that the last shilling had been changed, and that unless he got work they would have to face a serious situation. But he did not lose heart: he assured her that it was better to laugh over their trouble—even though it might mean starvation—than break down in tears as she had done.

Rosa thought of his words now, as she stood at the window and looked out into the dismal Court; and while she still stood there, she heard a quick step below, and saw a young man with a frank handsome face stop at their door and raise the knocker. She could see him glancing up at her by the street lamp.

Sidney Trench—for it was he—having knocked at the old house in Took's Court, again glanced towards the window; and the glimpse he gained of the girl by the dim light thrown upon her set him wondering. Where had he seen that pretty dark face before? Next moment the door opened and the dark face was looking up inquiringly at him. And now, so familiar did her

whole appearance seem to Sidney, that he could scarcely suppress a smile of recognition. Where had they met, and when? These questions rose to his lips; but he could not give them utterance. He could only look at the girl in silent wonder and admiration. It was like a dream-scene that had flashed through his brain only to vex and bewilder him.

'Do you wish to see Mr Norris?'

Her voice scarcely recalled him; for it puzzled him, too, little less than the face.

'Yes. Does he live here?'

She led the way into the parlour. 'He will be with you directly.—Are you Mr Trench?'

He was standing with his back towards the window. The girl lingered at the door, and was glancing at him with modest curiosity. Was it his fancy, or was there a look of recognition in her eyes too? He hastened to answer her.

'My name is Trench—Sidney Trench. Have I the pleasure to address Miss Norris?'

She hesitated a moment before answering; then she looked up into his face and said: 'My name is Rosa.'

An exclamation nearly escaped him. But at this moment the old clerk came in with a light. It was an antique reading-lamp, of which the glass was broken.

Rosa went out, and Abel Norris closed the door.

'Pray, be seated, sir,' and Sidney sat down by the fireside where the girl had been dreaming not many minutes before.

Norris placed himself at his desk; he was more at his ease in that position. Taking the quill from his ear, he dipped it in the ink with some show of energy, such is the force of habit; then he waited for Sidney to speak.

'You have had some years' experience,' the young man suggested, 'in a lawyer's office?'

'Fifty, sir: fifty years, and one or two to spare.'

Sidney scrutinised the clerk's face. 'In London?'

'At St Albans,' said Norris, 'for over forty years. Since then, we've been wandering here and there; for when mother died'—

'Your wife?'

'That's what I should say—my wife. For when she died,' he resumed, 'we thought we would seek our fortune, so to speak. We have met with nothing but misfortune.'

'I'm sorry to hear that,' said Sidney sympathetically; 'and I hope your fortune will now mend.'

For a moment the young lawyer looked thoughtful. He then resumed: 'All that I have heard about you,' said he, 'makes me anxious, if I can, to serve you. And I would offer you without hesitation a place in our office; but I find it impossible to do so.' Sidney Trench, without turning his head, glanced towards the old clerk; for he heard the pen drop from the man's fingers. He now observed that he was pressing his hands to his head in a despairing attitude.

There was a lengthy pause. Sidney felt that, after his conversation with Mr Pilkington, he would be acting decidedly in opposition to his wishes if he engaged this clerk. How, then, could he serve one who appeared so deserving? He had roused his interest; and was he not also interested in the dark eyes that had looked up into his face when he came in? The young lawyer

turned to the clerk. 'Mr Norris,' said he, 'I have something to propose. Although I cannot promise, at least not at once, a situation in our office, there is no reason why you should not work here. I want some deeds and other documents copied. Will you undertake to do this for me?'

Norris briskly picked up his pen. 'Here, sir, at my desk? It is the method I should prefer.'

'Is it? Then you shall begin,' said Sidney, 'to-morrow morning.—Meanwhile,' added the young man, taking a cheque from his pocket, 'put this in your desk.'

The old clerk could not speak; but his trembling outstretched hand and the tears that sprang to his eyes expressed his gratitude.

'You have no family?' Sidney presently remarked.

'No, sir, none,' said Norris; 'only Rosa.'

Sidney regarded the man keenly. 'The young girl who'—he hesitated slightly—'who let me in?'

'Yes.'

'Ah,' said Sidney, assuming indifference, 'a grandchild, perhaps?'

'An adopted daughter.'—After a moment's silence, he added: 'It's a strange story.'

'Indeed?' and Sidney looked up inquiringly into the old clerk's face.

Norris became thoughtful; and then, in a low voice, as if recalling to mind the incident, rather than addressing Sidney Trench, he said: 'It was one afternoon, a wintry afternoon, just twelve years ago. I was sitting at my desk at St Albans—as it might be now—and happening to glance towards the window, I saw an elderly gentleman coming across the road. The gentleman stopped, and seeing my wife at the front door, spoke to her; and presently they came in together where I was sitting. My wife was holding a child—a little girl—by the hand.' Pausing a moment, with the pensive look still on his face, he then resumed. He had placed his snuff-box on the table, but had not mustered the courage yet, in the presence of his new master, to extract a pinch. 'A prettier child,' said he, 'with her dark eyes and thick black hair, I never saw. I took to her at once—fell in love with her, so to speak, at first sight! The gentleman briefly explained his errand. He was going abroad—he did not say for how long, and wanted a home for the child. He had been recommended to call upon us. Would we undertake the charge of this little girl during his absence? He would pay us liberally.'

'Can you recall to mind,' interrupted Sidney, 'what this gentleman was like?'

'Yes; I shall never forget that,' replied Norris.

'A stern face, with thick gray eyebrows. I don't remember the eyes, but it was a hard mouth; a hard man, I thought; a reticent man, who seemed to read your character at a glance, and gain your confidence by sheer force of intellect. A more clever face—as I expressed myself to my wife at the time—I never saw.'

'What age did he appear?'

'Between sixty and seventy. And I remember thinking—perhaps because I had to do with the law myself—that he must be a member of the legal profession.' In an absent-minded manner, Norris took a pinch of snuff, and then concluded:

'We accepted the offer, gladly enough, for we were very poor. He placed fifty pounds in bank-notes in my hand; and he wrote down an address in Paris, and promised that we should soon hear from him again. I posted letters to that address, but never received any answer; so at last I ceased writing. We have neither seen nor heard anything of him since.'

Sidney now rose, and stood on the hearth-rug with an earnest look on his face. 'A mysterious affair. Have you no clue?'

'None. I have even lost the address in Paris.'

'How comes it that you call the girl Rosa?'

'Ah! we were just talking about that, sir, before you came. She told us herself that her name was Rosa: and that was all she could tell us, though we questioned her over and over again.'

Sidney Trench, thinking over all that he had learnt from Abel Norris, began to recall to mind in a dreamy way his early boyhood. He had had a playmate in those days—now twelve years ago—and he had named her his little sweetheart. She was a child, he could well remember, with dark serious eyes and a wilful manner. But he had been sent away to a school in Switzerland for three years, and she had gone out of his young life; for when he returned to England she was never spoken of in his presence. But an incident, which had impressed him deeply, had one day occurred. Mr Pilkington had been appointed his guardian by Sidney's father, the late senior partner. It was a grave responsibility. Sidney Trench was very young; and Mr Pilkington, even at that time, was getting on in years; and should he die (this was when Sidney was fourteen), all the legal secrets—as far as Trench, Pilkington, and Trench were concerned—would die with him. To read between the lines of legal documents which lay in deed-boxes in every corner of the old house would be impossible; and the calamity, if it came about, could only be compared to the loss of a bunch of keys which could never be replaced; for the clients would take their secrets elsewhere, and the great firm would dwindle into comparative insignificance. The very thought of such a mishap—as Sidney had been taught to believe in his wondering boyhood—was enough to shorten his guardian's life.

So, one day, in his youthful simplicity, he had ventured to put the question to Mr Pilkington: 'Is my little sweetheart, sir, a legal secret?' For the thought that his guardian might die, and he might never learn what had become of that child, was the subject which troubled him most. But he had no sooner made this inquiry than he wished he had held his peace; for on the following day Mr Pilkington sent him back to school, though the holidays were only half over. He never again had the courage to question his guardian.

This old dread of Mr Pilkington—though so many years had gone by—recurs to Sidney when he goes that evening to join him in the library; for he is but a boy compared to this aged lawyer; and the fear of offending him is strong within him still.

And yet, if he had yearned in his boyhood to know something about that 'little sweetheart,'

he is yearning even more now to solve the mystery of her disappearance.

Mr Pilkington is warning his wrinkled hand over the library fire; he looks at the young man under his thick eyebrows. Can Mr Pilkington have observed—for they had met at dinner an hour or two after Sidney's visit to Took's Court—that Sidney is revolving some problem in his own mind? Something in the old lawyer's manner as he bends and warms his hand suggests an unusual sternness. 'Sidney,' says he, and the voice is stern too—'sit down and listen to me.—At least,' he adds as the young man takes a chair beside the hearth—'listen, if you still look upon me as your guardian; if you are still willing to receive advice.'

'Why should you doubt it, sir?'

Mr Pilkington's brow darkens at the question. 'You are not frank with me,' he replies in an angry tone; 'you are holding something back.'

Sidney does not answer. Why not? His guardian's words are like a direct challenge; and yet he remains silent. The old dread cannot in a moment be overcome.

His silence does not dispel Mr Pilkington's displeasure; it seems to add sensibly to his irritation. 'Be careful, Sidney'—the old lawyer admonishes him, raising his forefinger impressively. 'A secret character—a man who does not confide in his friend—deserves no compassion! I have some acquaintance with such natures; and when you come to know all our clients' secrets—and you soon will now—you may learn that troubles arise out of this very fault—secrecy. Profit by experience—my experience. That is my advice to you.'

Sidney now essays to reply. Mr Pilkington stops him: 'Another time; I am in no mood to listen now.'

Sidney, more perplexed than ever at his old guardian's attitude, turns away; and the lawyer, still warming his hand over the fire, looks after him with keenness as he goes out.

'THE NOTES THAT PEOPLE THE SUNBEAM.'

OUR knowledge in no department of science has made greater strides during the last few years than in that of Bacteriology. The existence of organisms far smaller than anything that the naked eye can discern was a fact little suspected until comparatively recent times; and ever since the microscope first revealed to our eyes the world of 'the infinitely little,' as it has been felicitously called, our knowledge of these microscopic forms of life has gone on increasing. Indeed, we have every reason to believe that we are now at the threshold, so to speak, of another and vaster world of even still more minute organisms, smaller far than even anything our most powerful microscopes are capable of revealing; about which, it is true, we as yet know little, but which we cannot doubt play a most important part in the economy of nature.

These micro-organisms exist in the atmosphere and in water; but it is only within the last few years that we have had any means of

arriving at an approximate idea of the extent to which they are present in these media. It is in the first instance to the brilliant investigations of M. Pasteur that we owe our knowledge on this point; and the important experiments he was the first to carry out have been developed and extended by others. Pasteur showed that with regard to the presence of these micro-organisms in the atmosphere, the higher the altitude reached and the greater the distance from human habitations, the purer was the air. These investigations, so brilliantly begun by the great French chemist, have been carried on by chemists and physiologists both in this country and on the Continent. Professor Tyndall has shown that in calm air a rapid subsidence of these microbes takes place. The distinguished German physiologist Dr Koch has devised a method by means of which we are enabled to form an estimate of the number of these micro-organisms present in a measured quantity of either water or air. The method consists in cultivating the germs in a solid medium (gelatine is most commonly used). Each organism thus grows and multiplies on the spot where it is planted, as it is prevented from moving. The progeny of each micro-organism in this way gather round the parental home, and we have in the course of a short time, instead of the single organism, a large colony. All that is required, therefore, in order to test air or water for micro-organisms is to introduce a definite measured quantity of either air or water into the cultivating medium, and, after allowing a sufficient period of time to elapse, to count the number of colonies visible.

Some interesting experiments were made on this point a short time ago by Dr P. F. Frankland. The air was tested at different places and under different circumstances. It was found that the number of organisms present in the atmosphere differed at different seasons of the year, the largest proportion being found during the summer months. In a certain volume of air (two gallons) collected on the top of the Science and Art Department buildings at South Kensington, one hundred and five of these micro-organisms were found to be present. This was in the month of August. Indoors, of course the number is very much greater. Thus, in a similar quantity of air collected at the rooms of the Royal Society during a conversazione, no fewer than four hundred and thirty-two were found to be present; while another experiment showed that from the air of a third-class railway carriage containing ten people no fewer than three thousand one hundred and twenty microbes fell per minute on a square foot.

So much for the living organisms in our atmosphere; now for a word or two on the dead inorganic particles in the air. These are infinitely more numerous than the living germs; and an extremely ingenious method has recently been devised by Mr John Aitken, F.R.S.E., for the purpose of estimating their number. Like the organic germs, they are infinitely minute in size, most of them being altogether undetected by the most powerful microscope. It was necessary, therefore, to have recourse to some method of making them visible. The plan adopted was

as follows: The air to be tested was admitted into a large glass vessel, where it was saturated with water-vapour; then supersaturated by slightly expanding it by means of an air-pump. The result was a fog; and as it is known that a fog is caused by these dust-particles becoming surrounded by a watery envelope, the number of fog-particles shows the number of dust-particles. The counting of these fog-particles was effected in the following way: A very small portion of the air to be tested was mixed with a large quantity of air which had been rendered absolutely pure by filtering it through cotton-wool. The mixture was then admitted into a large glass receiver and saturated as above described. As the dust-particles were so few, instead of a fog a small miniature rain was formed, and the number of these small raindrops falling on a small silver mirror was counted, and, by a simple calculation, the amount in the quantity of air originally admitted thus estimated. The following are some results obtained: It was found that the air outside during rain contained per cubic inch 521,000 dust-particles; that during fair weather the number present was more than four times that amount; while inside a room near the ceiling 88,346,000 were counted. The dust-particles seem, however, to be most numerous near a gas flame, for it was found that in a cubic inch of air taken from the immediate vicinity of a Bunsen flame, the colossal number of 489,000,000 were present. In Mr Aitken's own words: 'It does seem strange that there may be as many dust-particles in one cubic inch of the air of a room at night when the gas is burning as there are inhabitants of Great Britain; and that in three cubic inches of the gases from a Bunsen flame there are as many particles as there are inhabitants in the world.'

OLD QUIN'S BANK.

ONE morning I was walking along the shore. The tide was ebbing, being already lower than I remembered it, leaving a broad stretch of glistening sand exposed. Projecting above the surface of the water were some timbers, and where they were left high and dry, curiosity led me to inspect them. The beams were evidently very old; but being deeply embedded, I could not tell if they were part of some sunken vessel or the remains of a jetty. Poking among the pebbles that were washed between them, I came to a cavity containing something round, which could be moved, but was too large to be easily withdrawn. Setting to work with a piece of wood, I succeeded in clearing away the seaweed and stones which blocked up the hole, and at length dragged out a small barrel, strongly hooped with iron, and encrusted with limpet and mussel shells. I carried the barrel to the beach, and seating myself in a cave, proceeded to examine it. Forcing in one end with a heavy flint, I drew out an oil-skin bag—all the barrel contained. Inside was a piece of soiled paper, on which the following words were scrawled in faded ink: 'We are driving on to the rocks with our rudder washed away. I,

Thomas Quin, do commit this to the sea. Let whoever finds it take it to my daughter Dorothy at Shingle Bay. No time for more.' On the other side of the paper was a rough drawing, of which at first I could make nothing.

This Thomas Quin was one of the bygone heroes of whom the fishermen in my part of the coast were never tired of spinning yarns. Quin had been very successful in his ventures; but on his last voyage home from France with a valuable cargo, his vessel must have foundered in a terrible storm, for nothing had since been heard of him. This happened more than thirty years before. His wife, who was a cousin of my mother, had died in giving birth to Dorothy; and the little girl, of whom Quin was passionately fond, was thus left alone in the world. She, however, was taken care of by some good friends in the village, who brought her up; and in course of time she was married to a young farmer, with whom things did not prosper, and who came to an early death. Dorothy Hendil was again left in an almost destitute condition, having now to support a little daughter. While in these straits, relief came in an unexpected manner. One evening, a weather-beaten old sailor trudged into the village, and making straight for the cottage, burst in on Dorothy and threw his whole stock of money into her lap. The neighbours crowded round; and it at once became known that her only brother Ben, who had long been given up as dead, had returned. After that there was no more want, for Ben was in receipt of a pension; and buying a small boat, he added to his income by fishing. My greatest delight was to visit my cousins and to go out with Ben in his little craft. I was almost as often at Shingle Bay as at home, and thus little Dorothy and I grew up together, and learnt to regard each other with more than cousinly affection. But I never mentioned the subject to my father, as I knew he would not allow me to marry a penniless girl.

These thoughts filled my mind as I sat puzzling away at the drawing in my hand, and raised the hope that perhaps Quin—who, though known to be well off, had left no account of any savings—might have hidden away his money, and the paper might contain the clue to finding it. Hiding the barrel in a crevice of the cave, I made my way to my cousin's house.

Shingle Bay, for which I was bound, was a deep inlet, shut in with high cliffs; the village consisting of one straggling street, built on the narrow strip of ground at the foot of the hill. A rough stone quay ran out into the sea for the unloading of small vessels, which occasionally put in here, and protected the outlet of a little stream that ran plashing down from a deep glen. As I went down the steep path I saw Ben Quin in his boat busy overhauling some fishing-tackle. On hearing my footsteps, he looked up and cried in a lusty voice: 'Well, I'm downright glad to see you, George! I'm going to hansom these new lines this morning. We'll go up to the Cottage and have a bit of something to eat before we start.'

Ben was a short thickset man, with a square good-humoured face, the colour of mahogany; and although getting on in years, was pretty well as sturdy as ever. We walked up the village, and soon came to the little thatched cottage, and enter-

ing its creeper-covered porch, were warmly greeted by Mrs Hendil and Dorothy.

I told the story of finding the paper, and they all crowded round me as I took it out; Dorothy leaning over my shoulder in her eagerness, read it aloud. Her mother was greatly affected on hearing this last message from the sea, while Ben had to clear his throat a good many times before he could recover his composure.

When they had got over the excitement, I asked them if they could make anything of the rough drawing on the back of the paper; but after carefully examining it, they came to the conclusion it was some old chart which had been used in the hurry of the moment. It represented an irregular oval, with the cardinal points marked, in the south-east part of which was a curious arrangement of five circles, the middle one being larger than the others. We sat discussing the discovery, speculating on the strange event so long that the fishing expedition was quite put on one side.

'I well remember,' said Mrs Hendil, 'that on the night in which father went on his last voyage, he promised me he would give up the sea when he came back. "I'm getting too old for the work, Dolly," he said, as I sat on his knee before going to bed; "and besides, it's a risky business. If this run is successful, I've made up my mind to retire from the trade altogether. Anyway, I've laid by a snug nest for you, my pretty.—It's in a bank." I remember he added with a laugh. Dorothy and I have searched over his papers again and again, but have found nothing relating to any savings, so I never could quite make out what he meant.'

Dorothy's mother sat looking sadly into the fire for a long time, during which none of us ventured to break the silence.

As I did not wish to be late in getting home, I was soon obliged to say good-bye; and on my way out came across a hulking young fellow, who seemed to be hanging about the cottage. He slunk off on seeing me, but not before I recognised him to be Will Jackson, the son of a coast-guardman stationed at the lower end of our village. He was a lazy, good-for-nothing fellow, who had been one voyage; but finding the work too hard at sea, preferred idling about at home.

That night I dreamed that Old Quin visited me and caused me to accompany him over the hills; but what his object was, I could not make out, for I awoke just as he seemed to be on the eve of disclosing something that was weighing heavily on his spirits. Though I courted sleep again, in the hope of taking up the broken thread of my dream, I was doomed to disappointment. After this, I employed my leisure in rambling along the cliffs with a copy of the chart in my hand, trying to find anything at all resembling it in which to search. Two or three years, however, passed away without any discovery being made, and I had come to regard the whole thing as almost hopeless.

One afternoon, Ben Quin and I had rowed inshore after a successful day's fishing, and hauled the boat up the beach of a little unfrequented bay called Flint Gap. As we had been hard at work in the sun and were tired and hot, we seated ourselves on a flat rock in the shadow of the cliffs, and after refreshing ourselves, sat talking

at our ease. Of late, I had relaxed my investigations; but some remark of Ben's made me take out my copy of the chart, and the sight of this called to mind the barrel which I had hidden away. The cave was not far off. Telling Ben I would not be long, I started up, and running over the sand, soon returned with the barrel. I took out the oilskin bag, and on carefully examining it, was surprised to find that it contained an inner pocket. In this was a piece of parchment which had escaped my notice before. To my great joy, it proved to be a more elaborate drawing of the chart or plan scrawled on the paper, with some written directions besides. Ben sat looking on in wonder, when I shouted: 'It's all right, Ben. We'll find your father's treasure; it's as plain as a pikestaff here. You'll be all rich now!'

'Whist!' said Ben at that instant, putting his finger to his lips. 'I believe there's some one listening in the gap up above. It'll be uncommon awkward if you're overheard.'

Thrusting the plan into my breast-pocket, I ran lightly up the steep narrow path and caught a glimpse of a man hurrying away. Though it was only a glance, it brought my heart into my mouth, for the man was young Jackson, who had some time before gone back to sea. He looked back on gaining the top, and seeing me following, he turned round and grumbled out in a half-sulky way: 'Well, how you startled me, to be sure, by rushing up so sudden-like.'—I looked at him without speaking, so he went on: 'I think you might give a poor shipwrecked fellow a heartier welcome, though we didn't use to be such friends over yonder,' jerking his thumb towards Shingle Bay.—'I've been through a deal of rough weather since then, and don't bear no ill-will. Let bygones be bygones, say I.'

From the shuffling manner in which he spoke, I felt sure he had been watching us and had overheard my incautious remarks; however, as there was no help for that now, I cut him short, and turning abruptly away, hurried back to Ben. Throwing the keg into the boat, in a few minutes we had her afloat, and rowed off round a projecting mass of rock where we were quite out of sight and hearing from above.

'I hope that sneaking scoundrel didn't hear all, Ben,' said I as we rested on our oars. 'It's lucky he betrayed his whereabouts before I had got any further; so let us hope there's no great harm done, after all.'

'What's done can't be helped,' quoth Ben philosophically. 'But, as you haven't told me yet what you've found out, I can't give an opinion.'

'Well, Ben, you remember that your sister said her father told her he had a snug nest put away in a bank, but that she could find no account of any money. This set me thinking, and I came to the conclusion that the paper I at first found in the keg referred to this money, which most likely had been hidden away. The drawing on this parchment makes me pretty nearly sure that if there is anything at all, it's in Danes' Camp. What I've got to do is to hit upon the exact spot.'

Ben had been looking intently at me while I was explaining, and now gave vent to his feelings in a long whistle. 'From what father said to Dolly—and he wasn't the man to make a joke—

it's sartin he'd put by something; and, to my mind, these charts were not drawn for nothing. But after all these years, it's likely it may have been found out; still, it's worth trying; and if we can light on the place and get the money, we'll manage to fetch it away safe enough, I warrant.'

Next morning at daybreak I was out; and taking my way over the fields, wet and heavy with dew, came to the headland that rose in a bold sweep from the level land below. Right ahead, looking near in the brightness that now overspread the sky, but in reality some three miles away, appeared the low dark line which marked the ancient bank of Danes' Camp. Going on at a brisk pace, I soon got over the intervening ground, and climbing the old earthwork, commenced my search. Though broken down in some places, and overgrown with dense patches of gorse and fern and the graceful trailing boughs of the bramble, the old ditch and bank retained much of their original form: the space enclosed being roughly square, three sides were entrenched, the fourth being the sheer edge of the cliff, which here rose to a great height. Commencing at the nearest corner, I walked round the top, the parchment in my hand, and so reached the farthest extremity of the camp. I was unable to discover anything that corresponded to the plan, which consisted of an oval with the points of the compass shown. At the south-east part were four circles, enclosing a larger one marked with a cross, while an arrow pointed to the south indicated fifty yards. I looked carefully for any object from which to measure fifty paces; but what had seemed simple on first seeing the drawing, appeared hopeless in practice now.

I sat on the bank, trying to get over my disappointment, and, to amuse myself, began rolling pieces of flint down the hill, watching as they bounded away till they were stopped by the furze bushes that fringed the path beneath. Having exhausted all the stones within reach, I tried to unearth a large flint which protruded from the turf, but found it a hard job, till, exerting all my strength, it came out at last, and slipping from my grasp, rolled down the steep slope and crashed into the bushes. At that moment I heard a footstep coming towards me, and was turning round to see who it was, when, in the hole from which I had pulled the stone, I spied a gold coin, and had just time to snatch it, when a scrambling noise caused me to close my fingers upon it, and the next instant the unwelcome form of young Jackson stood over me.

'Hillo!' said he, with what was meant to be an arch smile; 'you're taking the air early this morning, shipmet.' Prudently overcoming a strong desire to send him headlong down the hill, I took no notice of his pleasantry, but, getting up, commenced to walk homeward. I hoped Jackson would take the hint, and not trouble me with his presence; but it suited him to accompany me; and as I could not very well shake him off, I had to put the best face possible on the matter. All this time I had kept the gold piece in my hand, not daring to look at it, and on the first opportunity I quietly slipped it into my pocket.

We walked on silently for some time, when Jackson broke out with: 'I had such a rum

dream last night: I thought I was digging for a potful of money some one had hid in the ground. After working for a long spell, I finds it, when up you comes and calls out "Halves!"—"All right," said I; "that's all fair and square." So we parts the lot between us.'

There was a pause at this, and then I rather awkwardly remarked: 'What of that? It was only a dream.'

'Suppose,' said he, looking sideways at me, 'you was to find anything, and I was to come along, of course you'd do the same, eh?'—putting on a simple and friendly look.

'As it isn't very likely such a thing will happen, I don't see the good of talking about it; I was forced to say.'

'Now, look here,' said he, changing his manner and speaking in a bullying tone. 'I heard you and Quin the other day talking on the beach down yonder about the paper you found and what you expected it meant. My old grandad was a mate of Quin's father in many a run of goods, and he often said the old man had stowed away a rich cargo, which ain't seen the light since, I reckon. If you like to take me as pardner, well and good; if not, look out, for you'll come off all the worse, I can tell you.'

I was rather staggered with this; for it did not strike me at first that Jackson pretended to know more than he really did. As I did not answer, Jackson gave me another threat, and then dropped behind, but followed me home at a distance.

After breakfast, as there was nothing to keep me at home, I got leave from my father to stop for a night or two at my cousin's. Jackson was not in sight when I got out again, not expecting me so soon, I suppose; so I quickly gained the hill-top, and after walking some distance, sat down where there was no fear of being overlooked, and taking out the coin, proceeded to examine it. It was as big as two of our guineas, and as it had a hole bored through it, had evidently been used as a charm. On one side were scratched the letters T. Quin. Hastily getting up, I started at a run, and did not stop till I came to the place where I had found it. The bank at this part was thickly covered with bushes, and I now noticed for the first time that they almost hid a low mound. I made out its shape to be oval; and turning my face to the south, I took fifty long paces, which brought me to a large moss-covered stone, which did not rise above the level of the ground, so that I had not noticed it before. A huge bush overshadowed the place where I had discovered the coin, and this proved to be at the south-east part of the oval mound corresponding to the positions of the five circles in the chart. It struck me that old Quin must have dropped the gold piece while working at this spot.

All excitement, I pushed on as fast as I could to Shingle Bay, and found Ben at home. Taking him aside into the garden, I told him of my discovery, and showed him the coin, which he remembered having seen his father wear. When I spoke of what Jackson had told me, he looked rather grave; but brightening up after a bit, said he had a plan to deceive him. Lighting his pipe, and seeming to be greatly assisted thereby, he went into details.

'Now, as that young scamp guesses so much about this affair, it's my opinion the best way

will be to get the treasure, whatever it be, to-night. We can smuggle a pickaxe and shovel down to the boat in an old sail when it falls dark. Young Jackson is sure to be along this way after you; and if you keep indoors until the evening, he'll most like be hanging about all day. When we go out in the boat, he'll think there's something in the wind; and as he won't have the pluck, for all his stoutness, to tackle us by himself, he's almost sure to go back and get the help of that precious cousin of his. The moon will be up by the time we land the tools and are ready to work; so, all things considered, it'll go hard with us if we can't be the first in.'

We followed closely Ben's programme; and, as he predicted, Jackson was to be seen watching us; and as soon as we were afloat, he hurried away in the direction of his home. With the tools on our shoulders, we leaped on shore at the gap, and making our boat fast, we toiled up the steep path, and came to the camp just as the moon appeared over the hill; and by its light we set to work with all speed. We cleared away the earth under the bush, and had made a good-sized hole, when the pick struck with such force against a stone as almost to overturn Ben, who was wielding it. 'There's a rock or something as hard here, George,' said he ruefully, rubbing his arm and resting his back against the bank.

I shovelled away for dear life, and throwing out a lot of loose earth, laid bare a large boulder.

'Oh, that's all, is it?' said Ben. 'I was afraid I'd struck the solid cliff.'

With the help of a crowbar we prised the stone, and dragging it out, disclosed a bundle of dry ferns and heather; and eagerly removing this, we found a snug nest with five kegs lying in it.

'Stop a bit,' said Ben. 'A little more light won't be amiss.' He stooped down and lit a lantern under cover of the bush. By it we could see the barrels were arranged in the same order as the circles in the chart.

Ben dragged out the first, and giving it a shake, declared it to be full of French brandy; another proved to be similar. He then laid hold of the middle keg, but found it so heavy that he could not move it. 'Hillo!' said he, in an excited whisper; 'this is the one worth taking care of! From the weight, it must be gold. We must get it out of this before Jackson returns, for I've an idea he won't be long.'

We dug a trench through the bank, and so were able to roll out the heavy keg. This took some time, for now the moon was mounting up the sky. Happening to look over the camp, I could distinguish two dark forms making towards us. Seeing there was not a moment to lose, I quietly told Ben they were coming, and with his help, forced the keg over the edge, and sent it rolling swiftly down the slope where I had amused myself that morning. I heard it crash through the bushes at the bottom, and then all was still.

Whispering to Ben, I replaced the two brandy barrels, and shovelled back a lot of the earth, managing this so quickly, that when Jackson and his cousin came upon us, all trace of the barrels had disappeared. We went on digging as if we were not aware of their presence until they jumped down the bank.

'So you're caught, my fine fellow,' said Jackson, commencing to scrape away at the loose earth, and in a little time dragging out one of the kegs. 'As my father's substitute, I order you, in the name of the law, to hand over these 'ere smuggled goods.'

Ben roundly refused, but afterwards, on my entreaty, consented to the arrangement. The other kegs were dragged out; and the two men continued to dig deeper, but found nothing more, seeming to have no suspicion of the trick we had played; for each at length shouldered a barrel and trudged off silently the way they had come.

We waited until they were out of sight; then, getting our precious keg into a strong basket, and placing some fish on the top to conceal it, we landed at the quay, and carried it between us, with some difficulty, to the cottage.

We said nothing till after breakfast, and then, with bolted doors, we forced in the head of the barrel, disclosing to our wondering eyes a glittering mass of gold pieces, which when emptied out on to the floor made a perfect hillock of guineas. When we had recovered our breath, we counted the treasure; but I am afraid to tell how much we made it, lest my veracity should be doubted.

The neighbours were very curious to know the cause of my cousins' sudden rise in the world; and though young Jackson never heard anything about the fifth keg, yet he evidently in some way connected my cousins' prosperity with Danes' Camp.

A SUNSET.

A soft sweet ripple comes over the sea;
The sun sinks slow to his golden rest;
And you are walking alone with me,
While a glory falls on the crimson west.

A tender light over moon and hill,
Like a mystical veil of beauty lies;
And our hearts in the silence stir and thrill,
And your soul looks out of your dear blue eyes.

The things too subtle and rare for speech,
An exquisite sympathy can divine;
Our spirits wing off on an upward reach,
With your little hand lying clasped in mine.

See yonder, Love! where the lights begin
To faint and fade in the purple air,
And the strange sweet sorrow creeps dumbly in
That the heart of the Beautiful aye doth bear.

Darling! I know that your soul grows chill,
And your heart is full of a vague regret,
As the glory fades from each radiant hill,
And the shadows fall where the sun has set.

Yet, dear, in the future you cloud with doubt,
Our hearts will love as they love to-day;
The light of our loving can ne'er die out,
Nor our souls, unheeding, walk far away.

MYRA.

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